# WORLD PARISH

OCTOBER, 1954

HOLBROOK LIBRARY
PACIFIC SCHOOL
OF RELIGION

*Proceedings*

## World Executive Committee

**Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A.**

***August 11-14, 1954***

• ● •

## Confessional Meeting of World Methodists

**Wilmette, Illinois, U.S.A.**

***August 20, 1954***

# World Methodist Council

## OFFICERS

*President:* Bishop Ivan Lee Holt, 20 North Kingshighway, St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A.
*Vice-President:* Dr. Harold Roberts, 81 Queen's Road, Richmond, Surrey, England
*The Secretariat:*
Dr. Elmer T. Clark, Lake Junaluska, N.C., U.S.A.
Rev. E. Benson Perkins, 38 Belle Walk, Moseley, Birmingham 13, England
*Treasurer:* Mr. Edwin L. Jones, 1700 Brandon Road, Charlotte, North Carolina, U.S.A.
*Associate Treasurer:* Mr. L. A. Ellwood, 1 Watergate, Tudor Street, London, E. C. 4, England

## WORLD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

*Chairman:* Bishop Ivan Lee Holt, 20 North Kingshighway, St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A.
Dr. Harold Roberts, 81 Queen's Road, Richmond, Surrey, England
Dr. Eric W. Baker, 1 Central Buildings, Westminster London, S.W. 1, England
Mrs. Frank G. Brooks, Mount Vernon, Iowa, U.S.A.
Dr. Elmer T. Clark, Lake Junaluska, N. C., U.S.A.
Bishop Bertram W. Doyle, 1702 Hieman Street, Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A.
Mr. Edwin L. Jones, 1700 Brandon Road, Charlotte, N.C., U.S.A.
Dr. Dorothy Farrar, The College, Ilkley, Yorkshire, England
Bishop S. L. Greene, 1212 Fountain Drive, S.W., Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.
Rev. G. I. Laurenson, Box 23W, Auckland. C. 1, New Zealand
Rev. R. B. Lew, Park Road, Burwood, N.S.W., Australia
Bishop Arthur J. Moore, Wesley Memorial Building, Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.
Professor A. Victor Murray, Cheshunt College, Cambridge, England
Rev. W. J. Noble, 59 Central Avenue, Herne Bay, Kent, England
Dr. Oscar Thomas Olson, 1919 East 107th Street, Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A.
Mr. Charles C. Parlin, 20 Exchange Place, New York 5, U.S.A.
Rev. E. Benson Perkins, 38 Belle Walk, Moseley, Birmingham 13, England
Bishop W. J. Walls, 4736 South Parkway, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.
Dr. J. B. Webb, 66 Kruis Street, Johannesburg, South Africa

## OFFICERS OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE—GREAT BRITAIN

*Chairman:* Rev. W. J. Noble, 59 Central Ave., Herne Bay, Kent.
*Secretary:* Dr. Harold Roberts, 81 Queen's Road, Richmond, Surrey
*Assistants:* Dr. Rupert E. Davies, 96 Chesterfield Road, Bristol 6
Mr. John F. Mills, 264 Charminster Road, Bournemouth
*Treasurers:* Mr. W. A. J. Tudor, 2 Bayley Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.1
Mr. L. A. Ellwood, Watergate, Tudor Street, London, E.C.4

## OFFICERS OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, U.S.A.

*Chairman:* Rev. Dr. Oscar Thomas Olson, 1919 East 107th Street, Cleveland, Ohio
*Vice-Chairman:* Bishop Paul N. Garber, Methodist Building, Richmond, Va.
*Vice-Chairman:* Bishop Fred P. Corson, 1701 Arch Street, Philadelphia 3, Penn.
*Secretary:* Dr. Elmer T. Clark, Lake Junaluska, N.C.
*Treasurer:* Mr. Edwin L. Jones, 1700 Brandon Road, Charlotte, N. C.

# WORLD PARISH

Vol. III October, 1954 No. II

Published by the World Methodist Council and the Association of Methodist Historical Societies (U.S.A.) under the editorship of the Secretary, Dr. Elmer T. Clark, Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, U.S.A.


## Methodist Emphases in the Light of Current Theological Discussions


*by* Dean Walter G. Muelder

Boston University School of Theology, U.S.A.


(The current theological discussions herein referred to are the discussions preparatory to the adoption of the main theme of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, "Christ the Hope of the World." The author was a member of the committee which adopted the report.)

### The Spirit of Ecumenicity

The broad historical base of Methodism and its evangelical spirit make it a congenial participant in ecumenical conversations. John Wesley had a vital sense of the continuity of Christian tradition and the values of the Church of England; he had associations with the piety of the Continent, such as that at Herrnhut; he was deeply rooted in mystical piety; Scripture kept him close to the experience of the apostolic Church; the New Testament led him into an understanding of the Lutheran wing of the Reformation; Arminius and his differences with Whitfield involved him in acquaintance with the writings of Calvin; his appeal to experience and the work of the Holy Spirit gave him a Catholic spirit which distinguished between differences of opinion and of faith; his evangelical outreach gave him concern for an ecumenical hymnody; his grasp of "justification by faith" and of "sanctification" embraced both faith in the divine initiative and the ethics of perfection, thus drawing both on the Reformers and the older Catholic tradition; and his practical ministry recognized both the need for reform in the Church and the possibility of achieving it through the power of Christ in the class meeting and in the societies.

Wesley's disputations with Roman Catholics and Calvinists show a faith in the power of the living Christ to use persuasion and patience rather than arrogance and persecution. On July 18, 1749, while in Dub-

lin he wrote a "Letter to a Roman Catholic" and introduced the theological discussion as follows:

"I do not suppose all the bitterness is on your side. I know there is too much on our side also; so much that I fear many Protestants (so called) will be angry at me, too, for writing to you in this manner and will say, 'It is showing you too much favor; you deserve no such treatment at our hands.' But I think you do. I think you deserve the tenderest regard I can show, were it only because the same God hath raised you and me from the dust of the earth and has made us both capable of loving and enjoying him to eternity; were it only because the Son of God has bought you and me with his own blood. How much more if you are a person fearing God (as without question many of you are), and studying to have a conscience void of offense toward God and man? I shall, therefore, as mildly and inoffensively as I can, endeavor to remove in some measure the ground of your unkindness by plainly declaring what our belief and what our practice is, that you may see we are not altogether such monsters as, perhaps, you imagined us to be."

On the other side he says in "A Word to a Protestant":

"Does the papist abroad persecute? Does he force another man's conscience? So does the papist at home as far as he can, for all he calls himself a Protestant. Will the man in Italy tolerate no opinion but his own? No more, if he could help it, would the man in England. Would you? Do not you think the government much overseen, in bearing with any but those of the Church? Do not you wish they would put down such and such people? You know what you would do if you were in their place. And by the very same spirit you would continue the Inquisition at Rome and rekindle the fires at Smithfield." "It is true if his conscience be misinformed you should endeavor to inform him better. But whatever you do let it be done in charity, in love, and meekness of wisdom. Be zealous for God, but remember that 'the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God'; that angry zeal, though opposing sin, is the servant of sin; true zeal is only the flame of love. Let this be your truly Protestant zeal."

In his essay, "What Is an Arminian?" Wesley also pleads the same spirit of theological discussion:

"Away, then with all ambiguity! Away with all expressions which only puzzle the cause! Let honest men speak out, and not play with hard words which they do not understand. . . . Many Calvinists are pious, learned, sensible men; and so are many Arminians. Only, the former hold absolute predestination; the latter, conditional. One word more: Is it not the duty of every Arminian preacher, first, never, in public or private, to use the word *Calvinist*, as a term of reproach; seeing it is neither better nor worse than calling names? a practice no more consistent with good sense or good manners

than it is with Christianity. Secondly, to do all that in him lies to prevent his hearers from doing it, by showing them the sin and folly of it?"

An illustration of another type will bring the congenial spirit of ecumenism in Methodism to the fore. In 1777 John and Charles Wesley prepared a hymnal for "the Use of Christians of All Denominations." Its preface sounds an ecumenical note:

> "The ease and happiness that attend, the unspeakable advantages that flow from, a truly catholic spirit, a spirit of universal love (which is the very reverse of bigotry), one would imagine, might recommend this amiable temper to every person of cool reflection. And who that has tasted of this happiness can refrain from wishing it to all mankind? . . . It is with unspeakable joy, that these observe the spirit of bigotry greatly declining (at least in every Protestant nation of Europe) and the spirit of love proportionably increasing. Men of every opinion and denomination now begin to bear with each other. They seem weary of tearing each other to pieces on account of small and unessential differences; and rather desire to build up each other in the great point wherein they all agree—the faith which worketh by love, and produces in them the mind which was in Jesus Christ. It is hoped the ensuing collection of Hymns may in some measure contribute, through the blessing of God, to advance this glorious end, to promote this spirit of love, not confined to any opinion or party. There is not a hymn, not one verse, inserted here, but that relates to the common salvation; and that every serious and unprejudiced Christian, of whatever denomination may join in."

Methodism's readiness for ecumenical experience is thus apparent in its hymnody from the beginning. But the ecumenical implications of hymnbooks have been realized by few Christians. One authority says, "hymnology and ecumenism is an almost unexplored area." In this area lie both non-theological and theological factors. They constitute an almost undigested mass of ideas, feelings, images, figures of speech, emotions, sentiments, inner disciplines and designs of social action.

Another sobering fact must be borne in mind. One historism of the ecumenical movement notes that Wesley, "the greatest religious figure of his age contributed more perhaps to the accentuating than to the healing of the divisions of the universal Church." This was due to the fact that the Methodist revivals had institutional consequences which combined an ecumenical spirit and ideal with an actual result in the foundation of new denominations.

### The Theological Situation

Our theological situation has certain distinctive themes as points of reference, although Methodists will remember that what seems in one portion of Christendom to be central may hardly be noticed elsewhere.

The Barthian storm center of centinental theology has hardly affected the theological discussions of the Eastern Church. The themes which invite attention are: the divine initiative, divine transcendence, divine self-disclosure, Christocracy, the discontinuity of faith and reason, the dialectical character of all theological propositions, the sinfulness of man, the Church, and eschatology. The theme, "Christ the Hope of the World," thrusts the controversial character of modern theology into world Protestantism. At Lund Dr. Visser 't Hooft thus referred to the controversial character of hope:

> "When in Toronto there arose among us a strong conviction that in this time of fear of the future and doubt about the meaning of human existence, we were called to proclaim the word of *hope*, we did not at first realize the implication of our action." [1]

This is an understatement, for eschatology is a vast subject, raising most of the theological problems of methodology which can be raised. At Lund, again, Dr. Edmund Schlink made this comment:

> "Indeed, the more closely the Churches have approached each other, the more comprehensive has become the task they have to face." [2]

We are thus confronted with a vast and complex situation about which I should like to make a few critical comments in general and then comment on some obvious Methodist reactions.

First, with respect to methodology. Christian theology is in a transitional period. Its methodological situation is quite confused. The ecumenical conversation cannot proceed very far at the theological level unless a thoroughgoing and systematic clarification of method is undertaken simultaneously. My experience thus far in ecumenical education impresses me by the lack of understanding that obtains everywhere of the methods of enquiry used elsewhere.

Secondly, with respect to the tension points suggested above. When the Advisory Committee on the main theme of Evanston gathered at Rolle in 1951 it was apparent almost at once that the familiar stereotype of Continental versus American or Anglo-Saxon perspectives misrepresented the real conflicts. There were deep conflicts between Barth and Brunner, between Wingren and some like Vogel and Schlink (suggesting serious differences in method and emphasis between Scandinavia and Central Europe) between Orthodox and Western (including most Reformation and Free Churches), and between some Asian and Western thought, not to speak of Anglican and neo-Calvinist tendencies. Moreover, it became quite apparent that the theological differences cut across all confessional lines.

Thirdly, the comprehensiveness of the encounter. The ecumenical

[1] Lund Report FAO, 131.
[2] Ibid., 156.

conversation of the Committee shows growth in the inclusiveness of the treatment and a developing unity among the parts of the report. Dr. Tomkins pointed to this aspect of ecumenicity in his book, *The Church in the Purpose of God.* In speaking of the Amsterdam Assembly he said:

> "The point to be noted here is the attempt of Amsterdam to compel every Church to think every doctrine into every other doctrine. A confessional tradition worthy of the name is a 'self-consistent whole,' the parts stand together. That is why, in the history of reunion discussion, now this doctrine, now that has been supposed crucial."

It is important that every attempt at stating a theological doctrine must make clear what it means with repect to related doctrines. The inner polarity of the doctrines of God and man, for example, or of sin and faith, or of the self and the neighbor, or of church and community always force us to think every theological category through every other category. It is not surprising that a report which was marked in the first instance by an obvious futuristic eschatology would in the last instance have stressed the living Christ and the present Kingdom as well as the Kingdom which is to come. The first report elicited criticism from Methodists which lifted up important Methodist emphases.

### Methodist Criticisms

As we analyze the criticisms we are aware that Methodist thinking rejects the dominant tone of pessimism and the seemingly wholesale consignment of history to the powers of evil and decay. Methodism has always recognized that evil and sin are deeply rooted in human experience and in the social order, but it has rejected any pessimistic conclusions regarding the future of individual persons or history as a whole. It would be unfair to affirm that the Commission intended pessimistic conclusions about persons, or to consign history to evil. Indeed, it is clear that men like Karl Barth saw finally no place for ultimate tragedy in the Christian view of history. But Methodists had to resist the pessimistic overtones of an eschatology which was formulated in such futuristic terms that it left the whole sphere of social and historical existence unsupported by present divine resources.

It is obvious that insufficient attention was paid to the work of the Holy Spirit. In the effort to pay attention to Christ as the hope of the world the Commission's formulations were not adequately Trinitarian. Christocentric affirmation ought never to neglect the doctrine of God as creator and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The final report makes clear what we can all approve, namely, that the God who created the world is a redeeming God and continues to support and to endow with all manner of grace his children as they live out their lives in history. It has a clear Trinitarian formulation. Methodists can continue to make

a contribution by their strong emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, relating it to creation and the work of Jesus Christ in history.

The first report was too futuristic. This is but a part of the larger problem of adequately relating Christian faith and experience to the meaning of time. Christian thought must grasp synoptically the temporal process of creation, redemption and fulfillment with the self-transcending unity of God's consciousness. There must be a clear unity of past, present, and future. The Christ who was, who did come, is also the living Christ of the present, and that he is the Christ who is to come. Many ambiguities and failures of theology grow out of the tendency to separate the past, present, and future, so that some groups are fixated on the first coming of Christ and build their gospel entirely out of a supposedly completed work in the first century. Others are fixated on the future, leaving the present tasks and life with no real meaning or support. Others have such a spiritualized view of the work of Christ in the present that the Christian life is made a compromise. Here again our need is a comprehensive faith adequately related to time in its fullest dimensions, and to the unity of transcendence and immanence in the personal wholeness of God.

This emphasis of an adequate view of unity has a bearing also on the trinity of virtues which Paul brings together when he speaks of faith, hope, and charity. In our first report hope was not adequately related to faith and virtually nothing was said about love. In the second report the first of these difficulties was largely overcome but there was still an inadequate treatment of the relationship of hope to love. This is overcome when we recognize that hope is not primarily a psychological state of mind, although optimism is not ruled out, but is understood as having a *ground* in the character of God, a *goal* in the consummation of God's purposes which are coherent with His self-disclosure in Christ, and a *motive* in the love of Christ.

Love assures relevance for the present as well as motive for ongoing action, and defines the all-inclusive character of the work of sanctification in the individual and in society. Methodists from the beginning have understood that portion of the Reformation doctrine of Justification by Faith which perceived the essential act of trust in God. It is this understanding of faith as trust in the redeeming work of God which made it possible to speak so sharply against salvation by works and against the kind of faith which was overloaded with doctrinal belief. Faith involves a free act of trust which is at once a decision in the present moment to accept the present work of Christ. This doctrine lifts up the significance of persons and their free decisions. It affirms that God calls all persons into fellowship with Himself.

But if the doctrine of Justification is central for Methodists, sanctification is equally or more important. It emphasizes the future and shows fruits must grow out of the grace which comes through faith. Wesleyan ethics are perfectionist. They are in dimension teleological, that is, purposive. The whole of life comes under the discipline of the

love of Christ in whom one has put his trust as an act of faith. There is, therefore, an ethic of personal and social self-realization in our tradition and this sets us to work at tasks of hope and of Christian responsibility in the present world.

Social responsibility was also involved in the first report. The problem is how to relate the ultimate hope to the lesser hopes, i.e., decisions for present action in which we ought to be involved. When eschatology is rooted in a too transcendent conception of God, or a too futuristic emphasis of time, it is difficult to think clearly how Christians become involved as Christians in their earthly tasks. Some criticisms tried to derive present responsibility out of some single doctrine or Biblical injunction. For example, efforts are made to deduce present responsibilities backwards from the final end, or analogies are drawn between the self-disclosure of God and human experience, the analogy, however, running from the revelation toward man and not contrariwise. Some seek to derive these tasks from a doctrine of *diakonia* or service which one ought to render to his neighbor. Some derive it from the notion of the Church as an extension of the incarnation; others from the great commandment of love to God and neighbor; others from the concept of the Kingdom of God in the synoptic tradition; yet others try to ground the present responsibilities of Christians from the great missionary injunctions. In all such efforts there is a division in emphasis and in ultimate obligation between those who interpret all this from the work of God alone and those who see that in some measure man is a partner of God and is able to take significant initiative in this partnership.

We should not choose one Biblical point and then try to derive our Christian duty from that one point. It is better to recognize that the divine-human encounter is so inclusive as to involve us in interpersonal relationships among ourselves and with God upon a wide front. In this the many-sided relationships of faith and love under the righteous rule of God for his ultimate purposes will be inescapable elements.

The New Testament focuses attention on the fourfold affirmation that God is love; that God's love has entered history; that love is the standard in human relations; and that it is the calling of Christians as sons of God to have the same mind as was in Jesus Christ. God as love includes the universal concern of his redemptive will for the whole of mankind. The historic Christ includes the affirmation of all history as involved in the drama of redemption. Love as the standard in human relations includes positive guidance and creative reconciliation in interpersonal and intergroup relations. The Christian's vocation as achieving the mind of Christ includes free response on man's part to the forgiving love of God.

We must now return to some other main themes in theological discussion and begin with the divine initiative. There can be no doubt about the primacy of this idea in theology and in the practical life of the Christian believer. Were it not for the distorted forms of humanism

one could take for granted that to be a Christian is to respond in trust and faith to God's creative and redemptive acts. If we properly pay attention to man's initiation of certain social processes and moral deeds the fundamental initiative is still God's. "We love because He first loved us." Our striving, doing, deciding and working are responses of a creature to his creator. Our creativity is derivative. It is a gift of God.

The divine initiative does not imply that man's free creativity is denied, but it does recognize that such freedom and creativity is within a context which has been provided by the divine creative and redemptive order. Similarly, in the emphasis on the divine transcendence one must affirm the dominance of transcendence over processes in nature and society which identify such processes so closely with the work of God that only immanence is affirmed. These theologians have done the Church a great service who have corrected a one-side historical immanence by a sharp distinction between the WORD of God and the words of man. They have done a great disservice to the extent in which the world of nature and of history has been made of little account, and in which the judgment of God is made central at the expense of His love or His sustaining spiritual presence.

We come now to the notion of the divine self-disclosure, which is closely related to the contemporary interest in Christology and Christocracy. When John Wesley sought to summarize distinctive Methodist emphases he grouped four conceptions which are related to the divine initiative and to the divine self-disclosure in Christ. He stressed not only the transcendence of God but his activity through the Holy Spirit.

> "What was their (Methodist) fundamental doctrine? That the Bible is the whole and sole rule both of Christian faith and practice. Hence they learned, (1) That religion is an inward principle; that it is no other than the mind that was in Christ; or, in other words, the renewal of the soul after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness. (2) That this can never be wrought in us, but by the power of the Holy Ghost. (3) That we receive this, and every other blessing, merely for the sake of Christ: and (4) That whosoever hath the mind that was in Christ, the same is our brother, and sister, and mother."

Let us relate this Wesleyan formula to trends which are Christomonistic. The Christocratic emphasis in some contemporary theology is an advance over the older theocracy of Calvin's Geneva. In the latter case there was a temptation, often followed in modern social gospel circles, of making simple casuistic deductions from Biblical passages and doctrines to social, economic, and political affairs. Christian ethic has seen that such simple deductions cannot properly be made. The current Christocratic emphasis exalts the lordship of Christ without being involved in the errors of the older theocracy; yet Christ is often so exalted above the ethical sphere that the guidance and rele-

vance of his life, teaching, death and resurrection are left obscure.

Here we must insist once more on the relevance of the Christian hope to specific historical and social conditions. The sovereignty of the Christlike God is made manifest in Christian experience. The late Dean Craig properly pointed out that Christian assurance is based on the sovereignty of God. He then pointed to the historic Methodist emphasis on conversion to Christ as essential. The Christian hope is never the simple fulfillment of our special hopes. Christian hope is a criticism of our natural hopes. Conversion flows inevitably from the transmutation of values in the gospel. Our legitimate specific hopes are related to the historical and social conditions about us, but they are also transformed by the work which God through Christ is doing in the world.

The response of a Christian to the divine self-disclosure in Christ and to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit requires human initiative, a striving for perfection, and a growth in holiness. The Christian responds by an active sense of responsibility for spreading the Gospel to the ends of the earth. We have, therefore, a universal mission. The response of the Christian means also his participation in leavening and transforming society. This carries an ever-deepening understanding of the Kingdom of God and the establishment of righteousness and neighborly service in the world. The response of the Christian to the resurrection of Christ is finally a hope which makes a qualitative difference in the life of the believer who thereafter envisages not simply an ultimate destiny with God but a present awareness of the realities everywhere at work among believers and non-believers.

When we turn to contemporary discussions of the nature of man we must affirm the depths of sin in human behavior and the roots of sin in the self-will of men. The power of the theological revival in the 18th century and in the winning of the frontier in America did not arise from a glossing over of human evil and selfishness. The Arminian emphasis on human freedom and faith, and the universal possibilities in men to make an adequate response to divine initiative in Christ, took full account of the roots of selfishness and self-will in persons. What marks the Methodist tradition is simply the great *assurance* which in human experience and in the objective relationship to God accompanies the deepest acceptance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Even on the interpersonal human plane children learn to love because they are first loved by their parents. We know clinically that loveless families so distort the personalities of the children that they grow to adulthood often incapable of expressing genuine love to other people and are, therefore, incapable of bearing the fruit of self-realization. Adult persons cannot really love unless they have had the experience of forgiveness, which means that their loving is finally a response to the living initiative which God has taken and made so evident in the Cross. On the other hand, unless man takes some initiative, so that it is really his act of faith and his freely chosen decision, he cannot ap-

propriate reconciliation or love but continues to be an estranged, and therefore, guilty person.

Yet, Methodists are frequently chided with teaching a simple moralism with respect to sin. But from Wesley onward theologians were aware of the depths of sin.

> "How wide," asks Wesley, "do those parent-sins extend, from which all the rest derive their being; that carnal mind which is enmity against God, pride of heart, self-will, and love of the world! Can we fix any bound to them? Do they not diffuse themselves through all our thoughts, and mingle with all our tempers? Are they not the leaven which leavens, more or less, the whole mass of our affections? May we not, in a close and faithful examination of ourselves, perceive these roots of bitterness continually springing up, infecting all our words, and tainting all our actions? And how innumerable an offspring do they bring forth, in every age and nation! Even enough to cover the whole earth with darkness and cruel habitations."

This passage from a sermon has a contemporary ring and reminds one of the concluding paragraph in L. Harold DeWolf's *A Theology of the Living Church:*

> "Our acts do not spring from a vacuum. They express systems of habits, ideas and motives highly organized within our personalities. If we are really heartily ashamed of our sinful acts we shall be deeply contrite also about the corrupt sources within us from which they come. Indeed, since these habits, complexes, attitudes and other 'sets' within us are so persistently identified with ourselves and may also give rise to repeated evil choices, many of the more sensitive and thoughtful souls have dwelt more sorrowfully upon their sinful *condition* than upon any particular deeds. This is as it should be, so long as the connection with sinful choice is kept clear and strong."

To keep "the connection with sinful choice clear and strong" is essential to a sound Christian ethic. Free self-determination is a gift of God, a mark of the divine creativity in man. Man is the agent who determines within limits alternative possible effects.

We must say another word about the divine transcendence over man. Faith and freedom both presuppose a distinction between the will of God and the will of man, between the divine person and the human person. Both immanence and transcendence must be acknowledged and both continuity and discontinuity are involved. Our wills are not metaphysically merged in the divine will, the relationship is not a union of one being, but rather a communion of adoration, of prayer, of ethical striving, and forgiveness of deeds done in history and then laid on the altar of God for His correction and acceptance. The source of most of the difficulties in contemporary theology is their failure to affirm a genuine Christian personalism.

Christian personalism recognizes the philosophical and the theological truth that the universe is a society of persons in which God is the supreme person. Personality is not an individualist concept but a thoroughgoing communitarian idea. Social responsibility is thus metaphysically grounded. What we say about social life and the life of the Church must be understood in the context of this divine society. Such a view recognizes the truth in the Biblical conception that the Creator is a covenanting God and that the Children of the Promise are not to be confused with children according to the "flesh." While there is a cosmic society dependent for its existence on the creative work and the redeeming purposes of God, there is nothing automatic about membership in the redeemed portions of that society. This dialectic between the general human family and the family of God in the sense of the community of those who in faith trust God is made emphatic by St. Paul and St. John.

The social relevance of this for a theology of the present time is evident. The divine judgment on society which Paul and John noted in the first century bears also on the twentieth. There is, for example, nothing automatic about the hopefulness of the American, the European, or the Asian dreams. Some are children of God according to the "flesh." They may call themselves offspring of Washington, or Lenin, or Mau, and fall outside the community of those whose supreme loyalty is based on faithfulness to Christ. The criterion of faith is walking in the faith. Every generation must do its own faithing. There is no automatic progress in this matter. The children of hope are children of the Cross which must be borne in each generation.

In speaking of God as the ground of hope we constantly refer to the source of the whole moral order, not to some passing phase of legislated law and order. Our hope, politically speaking, is not in a government of men but in a government of law, and not in laws as such but in the unshakable moral order which we speak of biblically as the Kingdom of God.

We must now say something more about the Church. "Where," asked Dean Craig, "is the one Church?" He replied: "Wherever the saving grace of God in Christ is manifest, there is the Church. The Church is the sphere of God's salvation; it is composed of those to whom he has brought redemption." This is consistent with the perspective of the Methodists in Britain whose excellent analysis, *Deed of Union*, was given ecumenical circulation in a volume edited by Dr. Flew: "The decisive element in the New Testament conception of the Church is the presence of the living Christ in the midst of His own."

In this fellowship the first place belongs not to men but to God, for it is His creation. The long-expected Kingdom of God became present and manifest in the activity of Jesus. It is not contended in the New Testament that the Church was a perfect community. The Kingdom of God is supreme over it. There is everywhere in the New

Testament "a sense of contrast between the Church as God wills it to be, and the Church as it is." The fellowship which the Spirit gives provides a fourfold type of experience: (1) the individual experience is not severed in thought from membership in this Christian community; (2) the experience is universal in the sense that the new life in the Spirit can be lived in the world amid the ordinary callings wherein men work; (3) the experience of the closely knit community expresses itself in a sharing of material goods and in mutual aid; and (4) the experience is open to all and is offered to all.

The Faith and Order Commission Paper for the Evanston Assembly notes the Methodist position and cites a paragraph in the Lund volume on *Intercommunion* which is still useful. Methodists cherish a true place in the one Church, but

> "It makes no claim to be *the* Church, and it excludes no Church which confesses Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father. It acknowledges that its apprehension of Christian truth is incomplete, that its discipline of the Christian life is imperfect, that its ministry is limited to certain parts only of the world . . . and that its separation from other communions improverishes its life and witness, and it humbly asserts the same of all other communions."

### The Ecumenical Conversation

The World Council of Churches has taken pains to emphasize the chief traits of its existence and the process of its work in order to allay fears that it pretended to be a super-church, or an external authoritative council directing its member churches as to their form of life and character of their fellowship. There are five characteristics of the ecumenical conversation which are of special interest to Methodists because they are so congenial to our theological spirit. These traits are: (1) Seeking a common mind; (2) Representativeness; (3) Voluntary participation; (4) A horizontal and a vertical dialectic; and (5) The authority of merit and service.

Seeking a common mind has a relationship to the Wesleyan emphasis on experience and the confidence that there is a catholicity that emerges from our common possession of the living Christ. Over and over again in conferences down through the centuries, and especially in recent decades, participants from the most exotic portions of Christendom have testified that through their ecumenical experiences they were aware of the demands of Christ that they be of one mind. The common worship experiences have encouraged the empirical hope that "the closer we draw to Christ, the closer we draw to each other." This empirical basis of Christian assurance had its analogue in the experience of the Evangelical Revival.[1]

Over and over again the World Council of Churches has respected the principle of representativeness. Dr. Hodgson has made this plea:

> "I beg of you to give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to lead you

by entering upon your work here as men seeking, through discussion, for light on common problems, and not as men commissioned to defend either Catholic truth, Reformation principles, Orthodox tradition, the conservative spirit of the Anglican *via media*, or the pioneering enthusiasm of American independency."

The quest for a common mind can be realized only when we recognize that the truth of Christ has been given to the whole Church and that, therefore, representatives from the whole Church must be invited to share what in good conscience they feel the truth to be.

The Toronto statement on the Nature of the World Council of Churches makes it clear that the World Council of Churches exercises no external coercion regarding membership in or participation in its life and work. It remains one of the great achievements of the past few centuries that the Churches have learned that in matters of conscience and, therefore, of faith, coercion is itself an act of disloyalty to the Holy Spirit. There are still branches of the Church in which autocracy is ultimately dominant, but within the ecumenical movement the voluntary principle is represented. Only what convinces people by its truth can finally be binding. Every Church may enter into conversation and co-operation with other Churches without prejudice to its understanding of its own nature. This voluntary idea is inherent in the whole Arminian tradition. It has happily become characteristic of the ecumenical movement as a whole.

From the first three points it follows, on the one hand, that the ecumenical conversation comprises a horizontal dialectic among all the Churches. They enter into vigorous presentations of their own convictions and make criticisms of each other. We may use the work of the committee on the main theme as an example. The representative committee of theologies entered into a theological discussion and submitted a report. This set up a vigorous group of discussions all over the world. The commission took account of this and submitted a second report which in turn was subjected to world wide conversation so vigorous and thorough as to produce more than one hundred major essays. The third and final report of the commission experienced a kind of millstone grinding process in various sections of the Assembly itself.

But in addition to this human dialectic there is the vertical dimension of the dialectic in the ecumenical conversation. Everything that we say is subjected to the truth of God. All our theological discussions stand under the judgment of God; all must be measured finally by the ultimate truth; and the churches can only be obedient through humility before this final word of God. Here again the theology underlying the ecumenical process is one which recognizes the living Christ and a mutual transcendence of God, the supreme person, and His erring children. How different are these ecumenical conversations from the method of papal encyclicals with their alleged *ex-cathedra* infallibility!

This brings us to the last point, the matter of authority and merit. There is no papal authority, no external human agency, which defines once and for all theological truth with respect to doctrine, orders, or social ethics. The authority of the ecumenical movement and the World Council is in the truth of the pronouncements. The authority of conferences and assemblies is in the intrinsic merit of their work and services. This finally means that the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that certain things are true, and it distinguishes between what we believe to be true and the truth of God as it is fully known to Him. There are ample indications that the traditions of our Methodist heritage are in line with this aspect of the ecumenical movement also. There is, in other words, a theology of the ecumenical movement as a whole in which we as Methodists find kinship and which invites us to continue wholehearted participation.

# ESCHATOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF CURRENT THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS

*by* Dean William R. Cannon

Candler School of Theology, Atlanta, Georgia, U. S. A.

Eschatology, or the doctrine of Last Things, is to Methodism, as to all other branches of the Christian Church, one among many bequests which have composed that priceless doctrinal legacy which Christianity has received from its New Testament beginnings. Like every other inheritance, it has marked and qualified our present estate, so that the sum of our theological fortune, including what might appear as liabilities as well as assets, is far more than either our own contemporary reflection or that of Mr. Wesley and our other eighteenth-century forbears. Indeed, as a denomination, we are a part of all that we have met. Our communal past is more than a memory; it is also the vital residual of our theological present and a part of that inspiration which gives promise of our future.

Consequently, eschatology is as much our property as it is the property of any other branch of the Church. This vein of precious ore streaks the land of our faith in lines as distinctive and demanding of notice and use as others that are more familiar because they have been constantly mined, such as the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, Conversion, Assurance, and Christian Perfection, the assets from which we delight to expend because they buy so much on the markets of evangelism, missions, and church extension.

Though eschatology is owned by Methodists as by others, it does not follow that our church has put this doctrine to the same usage that other churches have, or that she has not interpreted in it the light of her traditions and given

it a meaning and a force peculiarly her own. German philosophy has had at its command the metaphysics of both Greek and medieval systems as well as the speculations of Descartes and the common sense reflection and hard-headed skepticism of the English schools, yet nonetheless it has developed a philosophy so deliberately subjective that it has coined a new vocabulary and has devised its own transcendental method with as much originality as an inventor employs in making his patent. So Methodism, commanding the theological resources both of Catholicism and of the Reformation, each appraised by the Anglican genius, has developed a theology so deliberately personal and experiential that its basic principles are fetched from the intimacies of the human heart and its very nomenclature is designed to reflect the deep and abiding feelings of the soul. Rather than deductive in method, this theology is inductive. Rather than coldly rationalistic, it is romantic, modifying the dictates of reason by the demands of the emotions. Rather than authoritarian and dogmatic, it is pliable, tentative, almost hesitant, patiently awaiting the outcome of experience to set its standards and to principle in every theological determine their application.

Always there is one regnant system, and that principle defines each specific doctrine and determines its interpretation and application to the practices of Christian living. The theme of Methodist theology is personal salvation, not so much as it is understood objectively according to the Reformation formula of "by grace through faith," but rather as it is apperceived subjectively by man through the surety that he himself possesses it and uses it in the achievements of character and the exercise of good works. The doctrine of eschatology is no exception to this rule. Consequently, the Methodist conception of Last Things is to a marked degree predetermined by its concern for present things, and what the future holds of spiritual possibilities not yet realized is not of nearly so much interest as what "the here and now" already has in the way of spiritual achievement. Our hope of the future, if divorced from our duty in the present, is as empty as a dream and as meaningless as madness.

## I

There is, therefore, little or no affinity, doctrinally or otherwise, between Methodism and those adventists and millenarian sects which have flourished with almost the exotic wildness of the tropics in what normally we think of as the temperate climate of American religious life.

The millennium, that traditional period of one thousand years during which Christ will rule the earth in person, is conspicuously absent from the vocabulary of historic and contemporary Methodism. Where the word occurs at all in the writings of our theologians, it is generally employed as a reference to the teaching on this subject by others or as a quaint reminder of this phase of New Testament and early patristic eschatology, more remarkable in

the breach we have made with the sensuality, materiality, and even temporality of its details than in an observance of its literalness and earthy portrayal of the post-mortem state.

To be sure, Mr. Wesley does not deny that the millennium will come, because, as he reminds the Reverend Doctor Middleton in his open letter of January 4, 1749, to say that the early church fathers believed in such a future period when the souls of them "who have been martyred for the witness of Jesus" shall live and reign with him is "neither more nor less than to say, they believed the Bible," and because Mr. Wesley, first, last, and always, was himself a Bible Christian. But still he is careful to remind his readers that they dare not, from their interpretation of the scriptures, attempt to supply the descriptive data of such a state, and he disclaims any knowledge himself of the time and circumstances of its coming.

His lack of concern for the millenarian doctrine is registered in the fact that in the index to the standard fourteen-volume edition of his collective works there are only five brief references to it. He seems never to have addressed a single sermon to this theme, and one will look in vain among his writings for a theological treatise on the millennium. Indeed, in a comment upon Bengelius' opinion concerning it, he wrote: "I have no opinion at all upon the head: I can determine nothing at all about it. These calculations are far above, out of my subject. I have only one thing to do,—to save my soul, and those that hear me."

But more than mere indifference to the calculations and predictions of millenarian adventism, there is inherent in Methodist theology an antipathy to the underlying spirit out of which such curious reckonings and prophecies come.

To be sure, there is something pathetic, as well as ludicrous, about the confident announcement by William Miller, an American Don Quixote whose books of chivalry were the Bible and whose fanatical zeal in study reminds us of its counterpart in the Knight of Mantua, that Christ would come to earth in 1843 and that the old order would give place to the new before men's very eyes. We can sympathize with Miller and his followers in their disappointment; for, if any of their members ascended hills and housetops in their ascension robes, they all had to come down again, and in the end had to submit, like their contemporaries, to a natural death. We can even admire his honesty and the freedom from pretense which led him frankly to admit that he had been mistaken and to renounce, once and for all, his adventist predilections.

But the adventist spirit and the use made of these calculations by Mrs. Ellen Harmon White, who picked Miller's brains as Mary Baker Eddy picked the brains of P. P. Quimby, cannot be so readily or kindly dismissed. We may smile at the selection by the Seventh Day Adventists of the small number of 144,000 of Revelation 7:1-8 as the number of the elect, but

at the same time we are shocked at their inordinate arrogance in claiming that they alone, because they among the Christian denominations keep the fourth commandment by observing the Sabbath on the seventh day, constitute the number who will attain unto everlasting life. This claim is an unequivocal repudiation of the Methodist teaching that salvation is freely offered to all men alike and that any circumstance impeding its realization in a person's life is put there by that person himself through his unwillingness to respond to Divine grace.

In a sense and to a degree that their advocates perhaps do not realize, these adventist and millenarian systems represent an effort to prolong the present into the future and to project the materiality of earth into the spirituality of heaven. The Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, provide a minute description of the millennium and state exactly how the resurrected bodies are to be fed. If the desert places, writes Judge Rutherford, are made to become as the Garden of Eden, then we may safely estimate that on the 57,000,000 square miles of the earth's surface (or 36,000,000,000 acres), the 28,441,126,838 persons who have lived could readily be divided into villages of 200 families each with 75 acres to the village. If this is not enough land, God can raise up new continents from the depth of the ocean and literally fulfill his promise that there shall be no more sea.

Such modern aberrations are but reminders of the eschatological extravagances which manifested themselves in the ancient church, and which likewise characterized the left-wing, radical Protestantism of the Anabaptists at the time of the Reformation. The second advent of Christ on earth, the binding of Satan, the one thousand year reign over the just, the unloosening of Satan, the war of saints and sinners, the conquest of evil by Christ, the great assize in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and eternal bliss in heaven for the good and eternal punishment in hell for the wicked, details variously arranged in the sundry acounts, have never appealed to Methodists. There is danger in projecting the conditions of time upon eternity. Mr. Wesley's admonition still holds: "The danger does not lie in maintaining that the thousand years are yet to come, but interpreting them, whether past or to come, in a gross or carnal sense. The doctrine of the Son of God is a mystery. So is his cross; and so is his glory."

## II

But if there is danger in projecting the conditions of time upon eternity, there is likewise danger in anticipating the future to such a degree of fervor that one misunderstands the present and acts almost as if expectancy were accomplishment and a far away promise, the fulfilment of which lies beyond time, were the negation of time itself and the annulment of all temporal responsibility. To be sure, the present may anticipate the future as it remembers the past, but it can never become the future until it transcends itself in a new present, made

either more splendid or more terrible by the exact realization to all that was potential in its own past and the creativity which marked its distinctive moment in history.

If the sensate millenarianism of certain American sects represents the capitulation of eternal hope to present fulfilment, then much of the theology of the state churches on the continent of Europe, conversely, represents the surrender of present accomplishment to an insubstantial and indefinable promise, the nature of the realization of which is incomprehensible because it is completely divorced from all experiential reality. Its God is incognito to the discernment of men, and his revelation is simply the disclosure that he is himself and chooses to keep inviolate the mystery of his own divine being. "It is the duty of the human understanding," writes Kierkegaard, "to understand that there are things which it cannot understand, and what those things are." "The idea of philosophy is meditation—Christianity is the paradox." "The paradox is above every system." From the viewpoint of human speculation, God "is the most ridiculous being that ever existed." "The paradox in Christian truth is invariably due to the fact that it is truth as it exists for God. The standard of measure and the end is superhuman, and there is only one relationship possible: faith."

Consequently, preaching at most is the announcement of the Eschaton. The culmination of all religious effort is prayer. And the injunction of the pessimistic author of the Book of Ecclesiastes is the warning to shackle the mind and harness all moralistic effort, awaiting entirely the doings of God: "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore, let thy words be few." Eschatology, therefore, intrudes upon the territory of every other Christian doctrine; present things are blurred and distorted by the blinding light of the close proximity of Last Things; and the Church is "an eschatological magnitude," the congregation of them awaiting expectantly the second coming of their Lord.

Albert Schweitzer's contention that "the whole history of 'Christianity' down to the present day, that is to say, the real inner history of it, is based on the delay of the Parousia" has seemingly been accepted by contemporary continental theologians with the rejection by them of its ensuing part, "the non-occurrence of the Parousia, the abandonment of eschatology, the progress and completion of the 'de-eschatologizing' of religion which has been connected therewith." Indeed, they seem to understand the eschatological expectancy of the New Testament Church as that of a second advent of Jesus, and this unfulfilled hope of the first century they have transplanted into the twentieth, disregarding the missionary and evangelical accomplishments of the first disciples which transformed the pagan world and created Western civilization.

Schweitzer's ruthless criticism of the thought and mission of Jesus, whose eschatology he presents as so extreme that Jesus expected the violent and catastrophic coming of God's kingdom

at the harvest time of the very first year of his ministry in Galilee, and even told his disciples that they would not complete their preaching journey through the cities and towns of Jewry before the end would come, does not disturb the urgency of their own eschatological pronouncements. That same Jesus Schweitzer describes as having laid "hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close." And yet, having been crushed and destroyed by it and thrown aside in the wake of history, they present him nonetheless as the Danielic Son of Man of this era, still announcing his apocalyptic advent, inviting them to his eschatological feasts, and proclaiming that the Church is a transitional society between time and eternity, his bride awaiting her wedding with the bridegroom in glory.

Schweitzer of course takes the Synoptic gospels, the Pauline letters, and the Book of Revelation as documents belonging to the greatest and most flourishing periods in the history of Jewish apocalyptic literature. And yet to him the eschatology of Jesus was so intensely personal and fanatically esoteric that even his own reporters, the Synoptic Evangelists, did not understand him. Consequently, in dealing with their gospels literal questions have nothing do "with the gaining of a clear idea of the course of events, since the Evangelists themselves did not have a clear idea of it before their minds; it can only be arrived at hypothetically by an experimental reconstruction based on the necessary inner connection of the incidents."

Rudolph Bultmann is more conservative in his estimate of the teachings of Jesus. To Schweitzer, Jesus was no teacher at all; he was the self-appointed Son of Man carrying out his predetermined role of the Eschaton. To Bultmann, on the other hand, Jesus never associated himself with the role of the Messiah; indeed, he pointed ahead to someone other than himself as the coming Son of Man. Though the dominant concept of his message was the "immediately impending eruption" of the Kingdom of God, still Jesus accepted the Jewish apocalyptic picture only with significant deduction of detail. It was the disciples and the evangelists who personalized the messianic concepts they and their contemporaries entertained in the Master. It was they who concocted the legend of the temptation and projected backward into Jesus' lifetime the stories of the transfiguration and Peter's confession at Caeserea Philippi as if they had been real history. These stories originated "in the interest not of biography but of faith." Without doubt, the first church regarded itself "as the congregation of the end of days," "the vestibule of God's reign," which was shortly to appear. Its sacraments were eschatological; and the gift of the spirit represented that glorious bequest given by God to his followers at the end of time. Missionary activity was the desperate effort to call men to repentance before the last hour of the last day of the last year.

But these interpretations, both of Schweitzer and of Bultmann, are historical interpretations of the New Testament. They are relieved of their exaggeration for contemporary Christianity by Schweitzer in his following of the Spirit of Jesus, not the historical Jesus' eschatological mistakes, and by Bultmann in his demythologizing technique in which faith can be extirpated from fancy as ideal can take the place of facts based on erroneous assumptions.

Contemporary continental theology seems to have accepted too much of Schweitzer's and Bultmann's New Testament interpretations and perhaps too little of the ingenious devices these men used to relieve themselves of the practical consequences in ethics and in life of their implications. For many of these theologians, no doubt, the historicity of much of Jesus' life is questionable, for they follow Kierkegaard in confessing that one cannot learn anything about Christ from history. Karl Barth, for example, has gone so far as to say that the humanity of Jesus as such is not revelation. Indeed, this person, dying on a cross, is to us a tragic figure, a veritable stumbling block for faith. But, all the same, they have retained the stress upon eschatology, the proclamation of the second coming, and the apocalypticism of these extreme interpretations of Jesus as if nineteen centuries had not intervened between us and him and as if that generation to whom he said that "some of you standing here shall not taste death until the Kingdom is come" were our generation too.

Professor Edmund Schlink of Heidelberg, in his address at the third World Conference on Faith and Order in Lund, Sweden, in 1952, defined the Church as "the pilgrim people of God." His first sentence was, "The Church is on her way between the first and second advents of Christ." Though she does not know what might befall her on this pilgrimage through the world, she is certain that the Master is waiting at the end of it, and she will be received by him as the victor over the world. The burden of his address was that Christ will come to redeem his people. He will appear as Judge also, not only as Judge of the World but of Christendom too, and his judgment will cut through all divisions, making mere denominational distinctions inconsequential indeed. Professor Schlink, then, emphasized that this judgment is not only a future one; it is already taking place in many spheres of Christendom—"in the immense historical catastrophes and persecutions which God allowed to break over many of our brethren."

The contemporary continental emphasis upon eschatology displays, in my judgment, a definite form or pattern, perhaps varying in details among various theologians but exemplifying nonetheless certain salient characteristics which all hold in common. First, the New Testament presents Jesus as an eschatological figure ushering men and society immediately into the presence of Last Things. He is the Lord of the harvest; his fan is already in his hand to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Secondly, the Church belongs more to eternity than to time; it is, in earthly form, temporary and transitory; it is constantly moving toward its everlasting end in glory. Thirdly, the eschatological process has already begun; men and nations are constantly being judged and redeemed; the signs which the New Testament gives as indicative of the end are in reality the recurring characteristics of all life under the scrutiny of God's judgment. It is normal for the Church to be persecuted, and the hardships described in the beatitudes are the common lot of the children of God on earth. Fourthly, it is not the business of Christians to concern themselves with temporal affairs. Man's disorder in truth is God's design. We are to watch and wait and anxiously pray for and earnestly expect deliverance through the second coming of our Savior. Fifthly, what is to be will be, despite our efforts; the nature and time of the Eschaton, like anything else, is a matter of God's own good pleasure. "Above the dogmatic eschatological necessity," writes Schweitzer, "there stands the omnipotence of God, which is bound by no limitations."

Against such an emphasis and interpretation, Methodist theology asserts a defiant and unequivocal "No."

To begin with, we cannot accept the New Testament interpretation which makes the concern for eschatology swallow up the whole of Jesus' thought and work. We repudiate any picture of the Master which is less than that of the perfect man; we cannot follow a mistaken fanatic or a mad enthusiast. Our view of him is still that of Teacher and Savior, one who shows us God's way and provides us with the power to walk therein. Consequently our concern is not with the unknown future but with the realizable present. The description of God as arbitrary and capricious is the picture which we hold of the devil. John Wesley, in his commentary on one of the most eschatological passages in the entire New Testament, wrote calmly and in keeping with the commonsense, activistic bent of his ministry: "How great things these! And how short the time! What is needful to us? Wisdom, patience, faithfulness, watchfulness. It is no time to settle upon our lees."

## III

There is a third interpretation of Christian eschatology, at least of Jesus' teachings about it, which is current today and which exerts considerable influence upon contemporary theological opinion, especially in Britain and the United States. It styles itself "realized eschatology," and thus by its very descriptive label invalidates the original meaning of that which it seeks, not necessarily to define, but to explain. If the "last day" had been realized already, then to what order of existence does the long series of succeeding days belong? Is it the Biblical day which in God's sight is like a thousand years? By it are we to assume that all progress, at least in the spiritual realm, is obviated? Do we find in it everything that ought to be expected in the do-

main of God's reign? For the petition which Our Lord taught the disciples to make to God, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," this concept would substitute the assertion, "Thy kingdom has already come from heaven to earth, and thy will is being done in time as in those spirit regions beyond time which we call eternity."

This interpretation of eschatology as having already been realized at a given time in history, and as marking, therefore, the moment of Christianity's advent rather than the grand and glorious climax of its historical existence, when time shall give way to eternity, is, to say the least, novel and, so far as I am able to determine, has no precedent in any of the major traditions of our religion. It is associated in contemporary thought with the name of C. H. Dodd.

Whereas Schweitzer, as we have seen, attributes the apocalyptic and catastrophic elements in the New Testament directly to Jesus, and insists that our Lord's conviction of the impending end of the created order was so extreme that even his reporters did not wholly comprehend its meaning, C. H. Dodd, on the contrary, holds that the teaching about the nearness of Christ's second advent and the immediate coming of the Kingdom on earth are the products, not of the mind of Jesus at all, but rather that of the primitive Christian community. Indeed, according to Dodd, all that Jesus taught had to do entirely with the mission he was at that time performing among men; the disciples and evangelists took his words out of their context and recast them in a new context of their own devising, and made them imply things about the future which Jesus himself never intended. Consequently Dodd employs the principle of form criticism in such a way as to surprise the originators of the method of historical investigation and arrive in each instance at a setting in life, so natural and so much like our own, that one is amazed that the tradition could have been so confused in the minds of the evangelists to have caused them to write what they did in place of it.

Take the story of the wicked husbandman who, in order to possess the vineyard they have been commissioned to cultivate while the owner is away, not only refuse to pay rent to the owner's servants but finally murder the owner's son and heir. This is a dramatic story emphasizing the ministry of Jesus as the climax of God's dealing with his people and showing the rebellion of the Jews in their "murderous assault upon the successor of the prophets." This is the natural interpretation of this parable, and, so far as I can judge, the same in Wesley's *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* as in Dodd's *The Parables of the Kingdom*. Wesley like Dodd, calls the Kingdom of God, in this instance, the Gospel. However, Dodd closes the story as Jesus told it with the question, "What will the owner of the vineyard do?"; while Wesley, following St. Matthew, accepts also the application with this futuristic

comment: "Stumblers at Christ shall even then receive much hurt. He is said to fall on this stone, who hears the Gospel and does not believe. In vengeance it will destroy him. It will fall on every unbeliever, when Christ cometh in the clouds of heaven."

But other parables, such as the Faithful and Unfaithful Servants, the Waiting Servants, the Thief at Night, and the Wise and Foolish Virgins, are eschatological in nature and must almost be retold in order to extirpate from them the futuristic judgment and fix the lesson, as Dodd does, within the scope of Jesus' earthly sojourn. These stories, he writes, "were intended to enforce his appeal to men to recognize that the kingdom of God was present in all its momentous consequences, and by their conduct in the presence of this tremendous crisis they would judge themselves as faithful or unfaithful, wise or foolish." A man's judgment of himself, however, is seldom accurate, and in all the major instances of personal life and history only the future can determine the real value of present doings. Many may express themselves members of the visible church, but few, writes Wesley, actually become members of the invisible church.

Indeed, Dodd's thesis leaves little or no room for growth or development in spiritual things, even within the framework of the temporal order. Such parables, for example, as the Seed and the Soil, the Tares and the Wheat, the Dragnet and the Fish, the Mustard Seed, and the Leaven are constricted by the event associated with the announcement of what God would have us take from Him rather than to what His gift, freely accepted, does in human life and society. The Kingdom, for Dodd, "is neither an evolutionary process nor yet a catastrophic event in the near future, but a present crisis." It is not that the Kingdom of God will shortly come, but that it is a present fact; and not a present fact in the sense "that it is a tendency toward righteousness always present in the world, but in the sense that something has now happened which never happened before."

This is entirely unsatisfactory to the Methodist point of view where growth in grace and progress in love toward the perfect life of God in Christ is introduced into the temporal order as preparation for the order which is eternal.

"Realized eschatology" is a misnomer. We Methodists would say "realizable conditions," which one can meet to prepare himself to live as he ought here and to guarantee acceptance with God in the hereafter. Heaven exists, if for no other reason then, to remind us that our reach must constantly exceed our grasp and that the ideal sought must always be out ahead in order to attain anything at all.

## IV

In the light of the analysis and appraisal of the foregoing views on eschatology, the Methodist doctrine of Last Things begins, even by inference, to take shape; and we realize how far removed we are both from apocalypticism, on

the one hand, and "realized eschatology," on the other.

The doctrine of Last Things, like every other concept in our system, serves a practical or pragmatic end. Whatever else its purpose may be, at least it is this: the last of life is that for which the first was planned; the goal of living is at the same time its deadline; whatever God intended us to do to fulfill our temporal destiny must be done before time runs out for us. The record of our deeds, for good or ill, is finished, insofar as posterity can read it, at the grave.

Consequently, the primary principle in our concept is that the Eschaton is an individual experience. It comes to each of us in the moment of death. The penitent thief, for example, asked Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom; and John Wesley, though he believed in paradise as "the place where the souls of the righteous remain from death till the resurrection," still in his comment on this request was constrained to admit that Jesus meant, "I will not only remember thee then, but this very day." The thief, Wesley wrote, acknowledged Christ as king, "And such a king, as after he is dead, can profit the dead." No matter what our peculiar concepts of the first stages of the post-mortem experience may be, no matter what interpretation we may give to supra-temporal reality, still once we have passed the border between time and eternity, we know that we belong to Him and that the relationship with our Savior here will determine our destiny hereafter.

In the light of this interpretation, whatever else the second advent may involve, whether it will be a universal incident taking place in the presence of all life on earth, whether it will end temporal reality as creation began it, certainly this much it must include: Christ's second coming to us takes place when we die and are translated from mundane to spiritual creatures; at that time we stand under the full scrutiny of His justice and He decides in mercy the nature of our immortal state.

Mr. Wesley makes this lucid in his thoughts upon Paul's hymn of love in I Corinthians. "When that which is perfect is come," Wesley interprets as "Paul's way of saying, at the time of death." "Now," he writes, "we see even the things which surround us, but by means of a glass or mirror, which reflects only their imperfect form, in a dim, faint, obscure manner; so that our thoughts about them are puzzling and intricate, and everything is a kind of riddle to us. But then (at death) we shall see, not a faint reflection, but the objects themselves face to face—distinctly . . . ." ". . . . Faith, hope, love, are the sum of perfection on earth, love alone is the sum of perfection in heaven."

For all practical purposes, then, in Wesley's theology, there is no distinction between paradise and heaven. The only reason he uses the former term at all is to have an interim state in glory for the saints awaiting the time when land and sea shall give up their dead, when the resurrection of all flesh shall take place, when God in

the majesty of his presence shall hold the great assize and pronounce judgment upon all creatures in the presence of all other creatures. But to those who have experienced the rewards of paradise the pronouncement of judgment on the last day is no more than the public announcement of what privately they have already known, perhaps for centuries or, as in the case of the apostles and Old Testament heroes, even for millennia. The final judgment can signify no more than recognition day—curiously similar in the thinking of American Methodists to the reading of the appointments in these days of open cabinet and pulpit relations committees, when we know where we are going long in advance of actually being sent! Indeed, when we consider the millions upon millions of people who have already lived and died, the second advent, as a historical phenomenon, would be limited and restricted indeed; if it is to take place in time, it must preforce, like the first advent, be localized by date and place and consequently be experienced only by those alive at the moment of Christ's coming.

Even Mr. Wesley sensed the incongruity of such a concept and wrote: "The small time, and the second thousand years, begin at the same point, immediately after the first thousand. But neither the beginning of the first, nor of the second thousand, will be known to the men upon the earth, as both the imprisonment of Satan and his loosening are transacted in the invisible world." The saints reign with Christ in heaven. The second advent as such, in contrast to the first, is given little or no attention by Mr. Wesley. Jesus' statement to Caiaphas that "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming upon the clouds of heaven," he interprets as referring, not to the second coming of Christ at all, but to his coronation in eternity after his ascension from the humiliation he had experienced in time.

If, therefore, in Methodist theology the Eschaton is primarily a personal experience, so that each individual is admonished to prepare for Christ's coming to him in death and consequently for his own judgment day, it likewise has a social application. Society too stands under the scrutiny of God's judgment. There is an Eschaton in the experience of nations as well as men. What is the norm whereby a civilization is measured if it is not the law of God? What enables us to appraise the culture of Greece and by what standard do we judge Rome? History inevitably divides itself into chapters, chronologically arranged, and there could be no history at all if what once was had not ceased to be. The Eschaton came to the kingdom of Israel and Judah through the invading armies of Assyria and Babylon. The glory of Greece which, like the sun, dawned in the democracy of her city states and shone in the full lustre of noon through the brilliance of her famous sons, nonetheless sank to an ignoble setting, and today shines, like the moon, pale and obscure, reflected only in succeeding civilizations. Each na-

tion and civilization in the past has been weighed in the balance of cosmic justice; the sentence of eternity always has been passed upon the accomplishments of time; societies, one and all, either have had or else will have their Eschaton.

Speculation about the nature as well as the time of the end of the world is futile. The coming of the Eschaton, either to us as individuals or to the universe as a whole, is not our business. It is God's. Likewise, concern over what heaven or hell is like, other than the inordinate desire to attain the one and to avoid the other, is profitless. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither can spiritual reality be described in the physical terms we know.

Methodist theology, therefore, since its inception has insisted that a man must become godlike here before ever he can hope to see and live with God hereafter. Consequently, our concern has been, is, and will always be in achieving, through the grace of God, the attitudes, purposes, and ways of heaven here on earth. We live, not in anticipation of a coming kingdom that will be imposed upon us by God, but rather here and now within the kingdom, so that what ultimately will be cannot be greatly different from what is, when we love God with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves.

## Report of the Secretaries

**World Methodist Council, Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A., August, 1954**

The year has witnessed a steady development in the organization of the World Methodist Council. Correspondence has been extensive and has resulted in deepening contacts between the various Sections throughout the world. Your Secretaries have been in contact almost weekly, and in both England and America there have been numerous meetings of officers and committee chairmen. All actions have been mutually approved in this way and there has been a conscious drawing together in fellowship and understanding. Thus one of the important objects of our organization is being achieved.

### In Memoriam

It is again our sad duty to record the passing of certain notable members of our body. Those who have been called away from us are the Rev. G. R. Acquah, Bishop Randal A. Carter, President Sarah Chakko, Bishop J. A. Gregg, Dr. A. S. Jackson, the Rev. J. B. Jameson, Dr. W. H. Jones, Dr. Gordon A. Sisco, and Dr. H. Watkins-Jones. To the list should be added Dr. J. Scott Lidgett, Bishop Paul B. Kern, and Mrs. Ferdinand Sigg. Your Secretaries have expressed the sympathy of World Methodism to the families of these sainted persons.

### Theology and Union

Your Secretaries submit herewith the agenda and program which they have prepared in consultation with the committees on both sides of the Atlantic. The program deals with the two themes most prominent in the ecumenical situation, theology and schemes of church union.

Methodists have not magnified theological opinion, but this does not mean that they have no theology or attach little significance to it. It seems increasingly evident in these days of widening ecumenical association that the distinctive Methodist emphasis in evangelical theology should be given a wider recognition. It is felt acutely in America, as elsewhere, that it is necessary to bring into prominence the importance of the doctrine of salvation as offered to all mankind; the immediate experience of the presence and power of Christ: the witness of the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit in the life of perfect love. These emphases are accordingly listed for discussion by this World Executive Committee.

In various parts of the world schemes of union involving Methodist churches are under discussion. Our people are always and everywhere to be counted on the side of union, although they owe it to themselves, and to the united churches about to be formed, to guard against the loss or dissipation of the great biblical principles which Wesley recovered and which are Methodism's reason for becoming and existing. While no control is exercised over any Methodist group, it is most desirable that none should proceed with plans for union without consultation with the World Methodist Council. It is necessary that all possible effects of union should be taken into full account, so that in whatever changes may be found desirable the essential Methodist witness should be preserved.

We hope that these subjects will commend themselves to the Committee as worthy of consideration and that from the discussions much value will be derived.

### Constitution

According to instructions your Secretaries are transmitting the tentative draft of a Constitution. It embodies the principles adopted at Birmingham last year. This is an important document which will govern the future course of our world organization. It should be discussed in detail and referred back to us for revision and submission to the Executive Committee in 1955 and a final report for adoption by the World Methodist Council in 1956.

### Reports of Treasurers

The report of the Associate Treasurer in Great Britain, covering May 1, 1953, through April 30, 1954, shows receipts of 1,139 pounds, 6 shillings and sixpence, with a balance of receipts over expenditures in the amount of 272 pounds, 10 shillings and 11 pence. There is cash on hand in the amount of 522 pounds, 10 shillings and 11 pence.

The report of the Treasurer in the United States for the fiscal year of June 1, 1953-May 31, 1954, shows total receipts of $43,498.19,

including $15,171.61 carried over from the last fiscal year. There were disbursements of $14,623.62 on the current budget, this being an underexpenditure on the budget of $13,350.85. The Treasurer has set aside certain reserve funds, including $20,000 for the meeting of the World Methodist Conference in 1956, and $5,000 for equipment of the World Methodist building soon to be erected at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. There is cash on hand subject to expenditure on the budget in the amount of $4,374.57.

The Treasurers will submit detailed reports to the Committee.

### Meetings and Contacts

Personal contacts between the Methodists of the world are of the highest importance and are being encouraged at every point. Several meetings have been held and others are being arranged. There is an annual meeting of the Methodists of Great Britain and the various countries of Continental Europe. Such a meeting was held in June, 1954, at Reuti, Switzerland, which brought together representatives from nine countries. The Swiss Methodists were hosts and the program of the conference was arranged by the British committee. Its major themes were "Methodist Theological Emphases" and "Methodism and the Ecumenical Movement," and consideration was also given to the Year of Evangelism, the refugee situation, and the future of the World Methodist Council.

Meetings of a similar nature are being arranged by the officers in the United States. They will visit the Methodists of the West Indies, assembled at Antigua in October. At a later date the members of the various Sections in the United States will be asked to meet in small groups at convenient points.

### Evangelism

During the year fuller information has come to hand concerning the Year of Evangelism. The chairman of the committee, Dr. Sangster, has just returned from a trip around the world, on which he bore the credentials of the World Methodist Council as its representative to our people in many lands. His report will be submitted in due course, and it will reveal a great spiritual movement which has achieved important results and is continuing everywhere.

In Great Britain the records show some thirty thousand new members, though the full effect is not yet evident and the work continues. Interesting accounts have come from Europe as the result of the newer methods, which include travelling teams of young people, student missions, film services, the open air cinema, factory contacts, tent missions, neighbor services by laymen, home visitation, and many others.

In Ireland the campaign bore real fruit and more is expected. One of the most striking responses is in Australia, where a unique nation-wide campaign has been carried through. Under the leadership of the Rev. Alan Walker, the Church, to a considerable degree has "broken through" to the heart of the nation through the use of

numerous means of contact with the communities. The work is to continue under Mr. Walker's leadership.

In New Zealand personal, preaching, and visitation evangelism have been used along with team witness and open air work on a wide scale. The news from South Africa is no less encouraging. In the face of an acute racial problem created by political action the Church has promoted an extensive evangelistic campaign among both white and native communities.

The evangelistic movement was carried out in the United States according to the plan, and the Board of Evangelism, headed by Dr. Harry Denman, the secretary of our committee, has announced its continuance for another year. Multiplied thousands of new members were received. This is not reflected in the statistics of net increase, however, because of the General Conference action which permitted the churches to drop "inactive members" from the rolls.

### Exchanges

Excellent and important work has been done by our Committee on Exchange of Preachers. This will be reported by Dr. Quimby, co-chairman. A dozen exchange preachers are now serving on both sides of the Atlantic. The exchanges are of very great value not only to the churches involved but also to the ministers themselves, who have gained a new and richer conception of Methodist life. Strong desire has been expressed for similar exchanges between other Sections of World Methodism, especially South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. Distance and cost are factors which cannot be easily overcome and no settled scheme for wider exchange on a regular basis has been worked out. However, certain visits have been arranged and others are in prospect. A minister and layman from the Italian Synod paid an extended visit to Great Britain and there have been similar visits on the part of German preachers.

### Woman's Work

The Committee on Woman's Work, which is among the most important, has not been able to meet and consequently has not outlined a program of work or defined its relationships. There has been correspondence with the president and leaders of the World Federation of Methodist Women, which was formed under the guidance of The Methodist Church of the United States and its women missionary leaders, a fact which may be regarded by some persons as limiting its relationships and interests. It has been suggested that this body, broadened to include all Methodist women and the total interests of world Methodism, might be related to the World Methodist Council as a department or as an affiliate like the International Methodist Historical Society.

This deserves the most careful consideration of the World Executive Committee, for its woman's arm, under whatever form or name, may well become our most effective agency.

## Oxford and Epworth

The Executive Committee at Birmingham in 1953 gave long and serious consideration to the Oxford Memorial and deferred action to the present meeting. Certain developments have occurred in England which seem to have a bearing on the form which the proposed memorial should take, and the British Conference has recently appointed a sub-committee to bring forward proposals to the session in 1955. It seems that under the circumstances no action can be taken or progress made at the present time. It is, therefore, recommended that the whole matter of the Oxford Memorial be referred to the Executive Committee in 1955.

At Birmingham the Secretaries were instructed to take steps to restore the tomb of Samuel Wesley at Epworth. This has been done, thanks to the generosity of Sir Frederick Stewart, an Australian Methodist. The tomb has now been restored and a united service in which the rector and Methodist superintendent participated was held on the completion of the work.

The Anglican authorities have decided to secure a more modern residence for the rector at Epworth, thus raising the question of the future disposition of the boyhood home of John and Charles Wesley. This has been under consideration by the Methodist committee and others interested in preserving the edifice, and it is expected that the ancient building will come into Methodist ownership to be preserved and used for Methodist purposes.

## Publications

1. **World Parish.** This little bulletin has been published at intervals according to the action of the Executive Committee in 1953. It is financed jointly by the Executive Committee, U.S.A., and the Association of Methodist Historical Societies and distributed without cost, which entails a financial burden to these groups. The editor feels that a more representative publication should be envisioned by the World Methodist Council, preferably published in Great Britain.

2. **Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury.** In 1951 the World Methodist Conference at Oxford approved the publication of an annotated edition of the *Journal* and *Letters* of Francis Asbury on recommendation of the International Historical Society. This project was committed to the American Association of Methodist Historical Societies for implementation. Work has been going forward steadily and very much has already been accomplished. It is hoped that it may be completed and published simultaneously in the United States and England in 1956. It has the endorsement of the U. S. Historical Publications Commission, which is cooperating with the editorial committee in every phase. It is expected that the completed work will be in five volumes, similar to the Standard Edition of the *Journal of John Wesley*. This is probably the largest Methodist historical enterprise since the completion of the Standard Editions of the *Journal* and *Letters* of Wesley. Thus far the costs have been borne by the his-

torical body, but since it is an enterprise of the World Methodist Council it is felt that there should be a sharing of the costs, which will probably be larger as the work progresses.

3. **History of Methodism.** A new three-volume *History of Methodism* has been projected by the British Committee under the authority of the British Conference. A carefully selected committee has been named and work will begin in the autumn of 1954. The new history will be written from the British standpoint but will present a complete view of World Methodism. Such a work will meet a real need and this worthy undertaking should receive the endorsement of the World Methodist Council.

4. **Who's Who in Methodism.** In 1952 the associated Methodist Historical Societies compiled and published *Who's Who in Methodism*. It was the largest work of its kind ever attempted, although the first edition was not wholly representative, due to the unexpected difficulty in securing responses to requests for information. It was planned on a quadrennial basis and it is felt that a better volume can now be produced because of the previous experience. The publishers are ready to proceed and seem to think that it can be made self-supporting. It is felt that this publication should be revised and continued, perhaps under the name of *Dictionary of Methodist Biography*. However, the secretarial staff of the historical group is now too limited to undertake the work of compilation and the cooperation of the World Methodist Council will be needed at that point. This is called to the attention of the Executive Committee for its advice and guidance.

### Emigration

A new need and opportunity for service is developing in connection with helping Methodist emigrants to establish themselves in their new homes. A plan has been satisfactorily established to introduce Methodist emigrants from England to the United Church of Canada. There has been more difficulty in developing a similar plan for emigrants to Australia, but this is under discussion in England. This whole problem is more extensive than is often realized and is not easy of solution.

### World Methodist Building

The Executive Committee in 1953 approved the location of headquarters for the World Methodist Council in the United States and the erection of a suitable building at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, and the Treasurer and members residing in the United States were instructed "to take in the name of the World Methodist Council any steps that may be necessary to secure funds and erect an adequate headquarters building." We are gratified to report progress in this matter. With the cooperation of the Bishops in the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The Methodist Church, more than half of the amount needed has been raised and pledges are in hand that seem to insure the success of the enterprise. Accordingly a site has been provided and ground was broken on July 4th

by officers of the World Methodist Council in a public ceremony. The building, which is expected to be completed by 1956, will house the administrative offices of the World Methodist Council and the Association of Methodist Historical Societies and also a historical library. This will be the only building in the world representing the whole of Methodism and its erection should give permanence to the World Methodist Council.

### Conclusion

The above represent some of the main activities of your Secretaries. They feel that our organization is making progress, more clearly defining its functions, and coming to understand better the nature of its future policy. To its more adequate establishment as a functioning administrative body of great usefulness to World Methodism they pledge their continuing endeavors.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Benson Perkins
Elmer T. Clark
*Secretaries*

## Minutes—World Executive Committee
## World Methodist Council

**Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A., August 11-14, 1954**

**First Session**

**August 11—8:00 P.M.**

The Executive Committee of the World Methodist Council and invited guests met at the North Shore Hotel, Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A., at 8:00 P.M. on August 11, 1954. The President, Bishop Ivan Lee Holt, presided and conducted devotional exercises.

Elmer T. Clark read a telegram of fraternal greetings from the Anglican Congress in session at Minneapolis. He also brought greetings from the Presbyterian World Alliance which he and Bishop Holt had attended as fraternal delegates at its recent meeting at Princeton, New Jersey. He presented excuses for absences on behalf of Mr. Edwin L. Jones, Treasurer, Bishop Arthur J. Moore, and Dean William R. Cannon.

### Minutes and Agenda

The Minutes of the previous meeting at Birmingham, England, in 1953, having been circulated without criticism, were approved without further reading.

The Secretaries presented a printed program. This was adopted as Agenda, after the program for the evening of Saturday, August 14th, had been amended to eliminate the discussion provided for that period.

The company stood in memory of those who had died during the year. Their names were called and Dr. Harold Roberts led a memorial prayer.

### Those Present

The Roll was called and the following members were present: Ivan Lee Holt, E. Benson Perkins, Elmer T. Clark, Eric W. Baker, Mrs. Frank G. Brooks, Dorothy Farrar, Bishop Bertram W. Doyle, Bishop S. L. Green, Bishop Odd Hagen, Oscar T. Olson, Charles C. Parlin, and Harold Roberts.

E. Benson Perkins stated that under the rule adopted at Birmingham some substitutions were to be made for certain members from Great Britain. These were as follows: Colin Roberts for Harold Roberts and W. Russell Shearer for Eric Baker, who were not able to attend all sessions; Mrs. E. Bartlett for L. A. Ellwood; Leslie Davison for Victor Murray; Wilfred Wade for W. J. Noble; Wilfred Easton, J. Morrison Neilson, Kenneth Crosby, and Irvonwy Morgan were announced as program speakers.

The presence of the following officers of Standing Committees was noted: Gerald O. McCulloh, Faith and Order; Dow Kirkpatrick, Oxford Memorial; Mrs. H. E. Woolever, Woman's Work; Harold Ewing, Youth and Young Adult Work.

### Invited Guests

Methodists related to the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches having been invited to participate in the program of the Executive Committee, the presence of the following was noted: J. R. Smalley (U.S.A.), Nolan B. Harmon (U.S.A.), Ferdinand Sigg (Switzerland), G. Alfred Brown (U.S.A.), B. M. Chrystill (New Zealand), Andrew H. Phelps (U.S.A.), Mrs. W. H. McCallum (U.S.A.), Sylvia J. Lew (Australia), R. B. Lew (Australia), Colin W. Williams (Australia), J. Owen Smith (U.S.A.), James G. Huggin (U.S.A.), Alice Wade (England), John R. Wilkins (U.S.A.), James S. Chubb (U.S.A.), Robert Thornley (New Zealand), J. Robert Nelson (Switzerland), Mrs. J. Robert Nelson (Switzerland), Thomas A. Stafford (U.S.A.), J. Wesley Hunt (South Africa), Milton B. Martin (South Africa), J. Manning Potts (U.S.A.), José L. Valencia (Philippines), Ralph Stoody (U.S.A.), Arthur West (U.S.A.), Atherton Didier (Jamaica, B.W.I.), Mrs. Paul Arrington (U.S.A.), Mrs. Robert J. Bartlett (England), Bishop Ralph Ward (Formosa).

### Secretaries' Report

The Joint Report of the Secretaries was presented by E. Benson Perkins, who commented on several points. He stated that one of the Teachers' Colleges in England would probably be moved from Westminster to Oxford, and that this might simplify the establishment of an Oxford Memorial by centering it in that college. He further stated that the British Methodists would probably acquire the Epworth Rectory and use it as a hostel or home.

Bishop Holt made a statement about Wesley's Chapel. He stated that since an appeal for the Chapel had been endorsed by the British Committee, the Council of Bishops of the American Church had raised approximately $30,000.00 therefor.

Elmer T. Clark stated that near-

ly $36,000.00 was in hand for the World Methodist Building to be erected at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, U.S.A., and that the full amount needed would be raised. He also amplified the Report of the Treasurer.

### Report on Woman's Work

Mrs. Frank G. Brooks presented a historical statement about the World Federation of Methodist Women. This was commented on by Dr. Dorothy Farrar. On motion duly voted the President appointed a committee to consider the whole matter of the relation of Methodist women to the World Methodist Council. This committee consisted of Dr. Dorothy Farrar, Chairman, Mrs. Frank G. Brooks, Mrs. H. E. Woolever, Mrs. Elaine Bartlett, and Mrs. Paul Arrington.

Ferdinand Sigg made a statement about the meeting of European Methodists at Reuti, Switzerland.

The Session adjourned at 10:00 P.M.

## Second Session
## August 12, 1954—9:30 A.M.

The Second Session of the Executive Committee met at 9:30 A.M., August 12th. Devotional exercises were led by Bishop Bertram W. Doyle. Dr. Oscar T. Olson presided in the excused absence of Bishop Ivan Lee Holt.

### Persons Present

The presence of the following persons who had not been present at the first Session was noted: Nona M. Brierley (U.S.A.), C. O. Hailwood (New Zealand), Wilbur K. Smith (Brazil), John O. Gross (U.S.A.), Karl Quimby (U.S.A.), Otto Nall (U.S.A.), Kenneth Crosby (England), Bishop W. J. Walls (U.S.A.), W. Russell Shearer (England), and Bishop H. T. Medford (U.S.A.).
(U.S.A.), Eugene L. Smith

### Scheme of Church Union

The Rev. Wilfred Easton outlined the Plan of Union submitted for the Churches of North India and Pakistan. There was a question and answer period, in the course of which Mr. Easton replied to numerous queries about the Plan.

The Committee recessed for refreshments at 11:00 A.M. and reassembled at 11:30 A.M.

### Racial Tensions in South Africa

J. Wesley Hunt of South Africa described the racial situation and policy of the government in South Africa. This was followed by a question and answer period, and Mr. Hunt replied to numerous queries concerning the situation.

The Session adjourned at 1:00 P.M.

## Third Session
## August 12, 1954—4:30 P.M.

The Executive Committee met again at 4:30 P.M. Dr. Oscar T. Olson presided. The presence of Lloyd Berthold (U.S.A.), Bishop Charles W. Brashares (U.S.A.), and Ian Grimmett (Australia) was noted.

### Nationalism and Union

Dr. Eugene L. Smith addressed the Committee on Nationalism

and Church Union and led a discussion on the subject. In this forum the possible dangers in the creation of national churches on regional levels was pointed out. Statements were made by Wilfred Wade, Bishop Hagen, E. Benson Perkins, Ferdinand Sigg, Bishop Brashares, R. B. Lew, Colin W. Williams, Bishop Ward, and B. M. Chrystill. There was a final summary by Dr. Smith.

The Session adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

**Fourth Session**
**August 12, 1954—8:00 P.M.**

The Fourth Session of the Executive Committee assembled at 8:00 P.M. Bishop Holt presided. The Rev. R. B. Lew of Australia led in prayer.

W. Russell Shearer raised again the subject of Nationalism and Church Union, stressing its importance, and it was referred to the Program Committee for incorporation in the programs for 1955 and 1956.

### Constitution

Elmer T. Clark read the draft of the Constitution on behalf of the Secretaries. It was discussed section by section. The Secretaries were asked to revise it in the light of the criticisms and resubmit it to the Executive Committee in 1955.

### Elections to Section XIII

Elmer T. Clark, on behalf of Section XIII, nominated J. Manning Potts as a member of that Section to fill the vacancy created by the death of Dr. Charles B. Ketcham, and T. Otto Nall to fill the vacancy created by the death of Mr. J. C. Haley. These were elected.

### Executive Committee, 1955

E. Benson Perkins read an invitation from the Irish Conference to the Executive Committee to meet in Belfast, Ireland, on Wednesday, June 1, 1955. This invitation and the date were accepted.

### Epworth and the Oxford Memorial

Eric Baker made a statement about the Epworth Rectory and its use when acquired by the British Methodists.

Dow Kirkpatrick submitted a report for the Oxford Memorial Committee, reciting the history of the movement and making certain recommendations. Dr. Harold Roberts made a statement.

There was discussion of the recommendations and certain amendments were voted. The following action was then taken:

1. That the officers in the United States be empowered, when they decide the time is practicable, to submit the Oxford Memorial appeal to the proper authorities of The Methodist Church for approval.

2. That the officers in Great Britain be empowered to present it to the Executive Committee in 1955 and to the British Conference.

3. That the Executive Committee be empowered to contact all the Sections and obtain official support for the project.

4. That the Executive Committee take steps to place the proposal and plans for financing it in final form for adoption and early execution at the Council meeting in 1956.

### Fifth Session
### August 13, 1954—9:30 A.M.

The Fifth Session of the Executive Committee assembled at 9:30 A.M., August 13, with Bishop W. J. Walls presiding.

The devotional services were led by the Rev. Leslie D. Davidson.

The presence of Bishop Wunderlich, Dr. Georgia Harkness, Dean James, Mrs. Ralph Ward, and Mrs. Ralph W. Sockman was noted.

#### Theological Issues

The theme for the day was "The Methodist Emphases in the Light of Current Theological Discussions."

Dean W. G. Muelder spoke on "The Methodist Emphases in the Light of Current Theological Discussions."

Bishop Wunderlich, Dr. Harkness, Dean James, Mrs. Ward, Mrs. Sockman, and Dr. Crowe were presented.

The Rev. J. Morrison Neilson spoke on "Arminianism in the Light of Current Theological Discussions."

The Session recessed at 11:00 A.M. for refreshment and reassembled at 11:30 A.M.

Dr. William R. Cannon being absent because of illness, Dr. Gerald O. McCulloh read Dean Cannon's paper on "Eschatology in the Light of Current Theological Discussions."

The Rev. Dr. Kenneth H. Crosby spoke on "The Emphasis on Experience in the Light of Current Theological Discussions."

The Session adjourned at 1:00 P.M.

### Sixth Session
### August 13, 1954—4:30 P.M.

The Sixth Session of the Executive Committee met at 4:30 P.M. Bishop Holt presided.

#### Theological Issues

The Rev. Dr. Irvonwy Morgan spoke on "The Social Witness in the Light of Current Theological Discussions."

This was followed by a general discussion of the theme for the day, led by Dr. Georgia Harkness. Among those who participated were Dr. Nolan Harmon, Dr. Ralph W. Sockman, Mr. Leslie Davidson, Bishop Holt, and E. Benson Perkins.

Dr. Olson made an announcement about the Methodist Confessional meeting on Friday afternoon. Dr. Quimby made an announcement about available copies of the resolution of the South Africa Methodist Church on racial issues. Bishop Holt made several announcements and introduced several persons.

Colin Roberts led in prayer and the Session adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

### Seventh Session
### August 13, 1954—8:00 P.M.

The Seventh Session of the Executive Committee met at 8:00 P.M. Bishop Holt presided. B. M. Chrystill conducted the devotions.

### Statistics and Book of Information

Bishop Holt made a statement about the different methods of compiling statistics used by the various confessional groups.

Elmer T. Clark asked guidance in preparing statistics for a new edition of the Handbook of Information. On motion of Eric Baker the Secretaries were instructed to contact all Methodist groups and compile figures of actual members and also the highest claim as to the total Methodist community.

### Wesley's Chapel and Manchester

E. Benson Perkins made a statement about Wesley's Chapel in London and expressed the thanks of the British Methodists for the action of the Council of Bishops in providing funds for its maintenance.

He also stated that part of the funds raised in America during the war are now being used in rebuilding and refurnishing the morning chapel and room number seven of the Manchester Central Hall and other churches and suitable tablets are provided.

### Exchange of Preachers

Dr. Quimby distributed a report of the Committee on Exchange of Preachers, which showed fourteen preachers on exchange between England and the United States, and two between Germany and the United States. He submitted also a report on preaching engagements made for Methodists who attended the meetings of the World Methodist Council and the World Council of Churches. Expressions of thanks were extended by various persons to Dr. Quimby for his work.

Bishop Pickett spoke about the Plan of Church Union in North India and Pakistan.

### Program Committee, U.S.A.

Bishop Holt on instructions approving the American members of the Program Committee for the Council meeting in 1956, as follows: Members: Ivan Lee Holt, Elmer T. Clark, Oscar T. Olson, J. Manning Potts, T. Otto Nall. Coopted members: Negro Methodist Churches: Bishops Bertram W. Doyle, S. L. Greene, W. J. Walls; Theological Seminaries: Gerald O. McCulloh; Youth: Harold Ewing; Women: Mrs. Frank G. Brooks; Exchange Committee and Missions: Karl Quimby.

### Rearrangement of Sessions

E. Benson Perkins proposed the reorganization of Section XII, without changing the numbering. Permission was given to add additional members of that Section if advisable.

Bishop C. A. Gibbs and Mr. W. R. Burleigh were elected to fill vacancies in Section XV caused by the deaths of Bishop Gregg and Dr. Jackson.

The Session adjourned at 10:00 P.M. to meet at 4:00 P.M. on Saturday. Atherton Didier dismissed the meeting with prayer.

## Eighth Session
## August 14, 1954—4:00 P.M.

The Eighth Session of the Ex-

ecutive Committee assembled at 4:00 P.M. on August 14th. Bishop Holt presided. Bishop Ward conducted devotional exercises.

The presence of Bishop Arthur J. Moore, Harold Bosley, William R. Cannon, Embree H. Blackard, Cecil Robbins, Claude Evans, G. C. Fain, Walter Niles, Weldon Crossland, (all of the U.S.A.) was noted.

### Introductions

Dr. Olson presented Dr. Harold Bosley, who made a statement of greeting from Evanston Methodism. Bishop Arthur Moore was presented. Bishop Holt responded to the thanks from British members.

### Executive Committee Members

Wilfred Wade and Wilfred Easton were elected members of the Executive Committee on motion of E. Benson Perkins. R. B. Lew of Australia, G. I. Laurenson of New Zealand, and J. B. Webb of South Africa were also elected, with the understanding that substitutes might be seated if necessary.

The officers in the U.S.A. were empowered to elect one or two additional members of the Executive Committee from Section XIII if they so desired.

### Report of Woman's Committee

Dr. Dorothy Farrar submitted the report of the committee on Woman's Work. Mrs. Brooks spoke in support of the report. The report was adopted, as follows:

I. That an invitation be extended to the World Federation of Methodist Women to become an affiliated organization of the World Methodist Council (parallel to the position of the International Methodist Historical Society).

II. That the following procedure be proposed to the Executive Committee of the World Federation of Methodist Women:

1. That effort be made to secure in the membership of the Federation the women's organization of the Sections of the World Methodist Council not now included.
2. That the officers of the Federation be confirmed by the World Methodist Council.
3. That the president of the World Federation be an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee of the World Methodist Council.
4. That the Federation meet at the same place and immediately preceding the meeting of the World Methodist Conference.

III. That a report of the program and activities of the Federation be made to the World Methodist Council and Conference.

IV. That the Sections be urged to see that there is adequate representation of women in each Section of the World Methodist Council.

### Vacancies in Sections

The Secretaries were authorized to secure nominations from the various Sections to fill any vacancies that have been created by death or otherwise and to submit

them by mail to the Executive Committee for election.

THANKS FROM OVERSEAS MEMBERS

Elmer T. Clark made a statement in acknowledgment of numerous expressions of gratitude received from persons from areas outside the United States.

FUTURE POLICY

W. Russell Shearer spoke on the Future Plans and Policies of the World Methodist Council. This was followed by a discussion in which several persons participated, including John R. Wilkins, R. B. Lew, Wilfred Easton, Atherton Didier, E. Benson Perkins, Wilfred Wade, Colin Roberts, Eric W. Baker, Harold Roberts, and Oscar T. Olson.

Announcements were made of the World Methodist Confessional meeting at Wilmette on Friday night and the motion picture, "John Wesley," at 8:30 P.M.

Bishop Moore made a concluding statement and led in prayer.

The Executive Committee adjourned to meet at Belfast, Ireland, in June, 1955.

IVAN LEE HOLT, *President*

E. BENSON PERKINS,

ELMER T. CLARK, *Secretaries*

## Methodist Confessional Meeting

### Wilmette, Illinois, August 20, 1954

The Confessional Meeting of World Methodists was held at the Wilmette Parish Methodist Church, Wilmette, Illinois, at 2:30 P.M., August 20, 1954. About 500 persons were present.

After a tea served by the ladies of the church the entire group assembled in the sanctuary. Bishop Ivan Lee Holt presided and Bishop Arthur J. Moore led in prayer.

Bishop Charles W. Brashares made an address of welcome on behalf of the Chicago Area, and Dr. Charles M. Crowe extended a welcome on behalf of the Wilmette Church.

The officers of the World Methodist Council were presented.

E. Benson Perkins announced that the Rev. Peter Kwei Dagadu of Accra, Gold Coast, West Africa, had been elected a member of Section II in the place of the Rev. G. R. Acquaah, deceased.

The following persons brought greetings from their respective churches: Bishop Frederich Wunderlich, Germany; Colin Roberts, England; Ferdinand Sigg, Switzerland; D. T. Niles, Ceylon; Peter Kwei Dagadu, Gold Coast; Alf Lier, Norway; Atherton Didier, West Indies; J. A. Do Amaral, Brazil; H. W. Plunkett, Ireland; C. O. Hailwood, New Zealand; H. W. Rist, South Africa; R. B. Lew, Australia; Emmanuele Sbaffi, Italy; Bishop Jose L. Valencia, Philippines; Bishop S. U. Barbieri, Argentina; Bishop Ralph Ward, Formosa; Bishop S. L. Greene, A.M.E. Church; Bishop W. J. Walls, A.M.E. Zion Church; Oscar T. Olson, U.S.A.

Dr. Harold Roberts made a concluding statement in summary, and Bishop Fred P. Corson pronounced the benediction.

# Constitution—World Methodist Council

As Revised for Resubmission to the Executive Committee

### Name and Purpose

1. The name of this organization shall be the World Methodist Council.

2. It shall federate the various Methodist churches and groups throughout the world; develop closer unity among them; provide contacts between the various groups; arrange exchanges of preachers; advise its constituent churches on union and other matters; disseminate information by publication and otherwise concerning Methodism; maintain headquarters for its activities; and do any and all other things necessary to the promotion of World Methodism and its effectiveness as an agency of the Kingdom of God.

### How Constituted

1. The World Methodist Council shall be a federation composed of Sections representing the Methodist churches of the world. It shall determine the arrangement of the Sections and the number of members allocated to each, provided that at least one fourth of those elected at any meeting shall be new members.

2. Each Section shall be composed of the number of members designated by the Council and all such members shall be members of the World Methodist Council.

3. The members shall be elected by the World Methodist Conference on nomination of the Sections at the Conference. They shall be subject to confirmation by the churches which they represent according to the usual method of such churches, but they shall exercise the duties of membership until they are thus confirmed, changed, or rejected.

4. The members of each Section may name any officer and committees desired, and these shall function only for the Section.

### Meeting

1. The World Methodist Council shall meet at such times as it or the Executive Committee considers desirable, but at least once in each five-year period.

2. The place of meeting shall be determined by the Council or the Executive Committee. The meetings shall be held in the main centers of Methodist work throughout the world, which shall be selected in the light of accessibility, travel cost, and the probability of a representative attendance.

### World Methodist Conference

1. The World Methodist Council shall convene a World Methodist Conference at such times and places as the Council or Executive Committee considers desirable, but at least once in each ten-year period.

2. The Conference shall be composed of all the members and officers of committees of the World Methodist Council, and certain delegates and accredited visitors appointed by the Sections in the ratio determined by the Council or Executive Committee.

### Relationships

1. The World Methodist Council shall be the legal and authoritative body responsible for the executive and administrative affairs of the whole organization.

2. The World Methodist Conference shall be an advisory body providing at its meetings a more representative group of Methodists from the various Sections. Its duties shall be mainly educational, inspirational, and fraternal in nature.

3. All matters of an administrative or executive nature shall be settled by vote of the World Methodist Council. The World Methodist Conference shall have the right to vote on all matters submitted to it by the Council, including the composition of the Sections and officers.

### Officers

1. The officers of the World Methodist Council shall be a President, one or more Vice Presidents as determined by the Council, a Treasurer or Treasurers, and a Permanent Secretariat. These shall be elected by the Conference on nomination of the Council or by the Council if and when it meets but does not convene the Conference.

2. The duties of the President, Vice Presidents, and Treasurers shall be those usually performed by such officers.

3. The Permanent Secretariat shall be composed of two Secretaries. They shall be the executive officers of the World Methodist Council, carry on its correspondence, maintain its headquarters, edit and publish its documents, keep the minutes of its meetings and the meetings of the Executive Committee, and perform all the duties of administrative and executive officers.

4. The President and Vice Presidents shall hold office for a period of five years, or from the close of the Council meeting which elected them to the close of the council meeting next following. They shall not be eligible for re-election. A retiring President shall be a member of the Council and the Executive Committee as Ex-President for a further period of five years.

### Executive Committee

1. There shall be an Executive Committee which shall exercise all the functions of the World Methodist Council and the World Methodist Conference in the interim between the meetings of these larger bodies.

2. The Executive Committee shall be elected by the Council at each meeting. It shall be composed of the officers of the Council and such other members as the Council shall determine, provided that there shall be a member from each of the larger constituent churches as determined by the Council.

3. The Executive Committee shall meet at least annually at such times and places as it may determine and preferably at places where the Council or Conference is not expected to meet. It shall determine all matters relating to the program and finances of its meetings and may invite non-members for particular purposes. In case of unavoidable absences substitutes may be desig-

nated for specified meetings by the Sections which the absentees represent.

4. The Executive Committee shall fill all vacancies in its membership after consultation with the Sections involved, and shall fill vacancies in the Sections on nomination of the Sections involved.

### Other Committees

1. There shall be a Committee on Exchange of Preachers which shall be constituted in the same manner as the Executive Committee. Its duties shall be to arrange temporary exchanges of preachers between the constituent churches of the World Methodist Council. It shall have co-chairman in such countries as may be determined by itself, and they shall maintain contact with and report to the Secretaries and the Executive Committee.

2. There may be other committees similarly appointed as the Council may determine. The Council may provide for the membership and structure of such committees, define their duties, receive their reports, and direct their activities.

### International Methodist Historical Society

1. There shall be an International Methodist Historical Society affiliated with or a department of the World Methodist Council. The Society shall determine the officers and committees needed for its work and shall nominate them to the World Methodist Council for election at each meeting of the Council. The Society shall define the duties of such officers and committees.

2. The functions of the International Methodist Historical Society shall be those common to similar historical bodies. It shall federate and maintain contact with the other Methodist historical societies in every part of the world. It shall prepare, edit, and publish books and periodicals of a historical nature on behalf of the World Methodist Council.

### Other Affiliated Bodies

Other bodies may be accepted as affiliates or departments of the World Methodist Council. The Council shall determine their nature and the terms of their affiliation, define their duties, elect or confirm their officers and committees, and do any and all things necessary to the success of their work as agencies of the Council.

### Amendments

This Constitution may be amended by the vote of three-fourths of the members of the World Methodist Council present and voting at any meeting, provided the amendments have been submitted by a similar vote of the Executive Committee.